

Former FBI official loses legal fight

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A former FBI official says he wanted to protect his reputation and refute "the most atrocious kind of lies" when he sued the author of a book that accused him of having advance knowledge of the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland.

Oliver "Buck" Revell's legal battle may have ended Monday, when the U.S. Supreme Court let stand lower court rulings that said he did not prove author David Hoffman acted with "actual malice," the standard required for public figures to recover damages in defamation cases.

"Public officials are left unshielded because people can say anything. They're virtually defenseless," said Revell, whose 1999 lawsuit claimed Hoffman's book, "The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Politics of Terror," accused him of allowing mass murder.

"It's absolutely, of course, totally false. It's absurd," said Revell, a Muskogee native who retired from the FBI in 1994 and runs a global business and security-consulting firm in Rowlett, Texas.

Revell's attorney, Stan Twardy of Oklahoma City, said he may ask for a rehearing before the Supreme Court.

The lawsuit was filed against Hoffman and Alexander B. Magnus, who financed Hoffman's work through a group called Americans for Responsible Media.

The book claimed Revell had advance knowledge of the Pan Am airliner bombing, which occurred over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people. It alleged Revell personally pulled his son and daughter-in-law off the plane on the tarmac of a London airport.

At the time of the bombing Revell was in Washington, where he served as the FBI's executive assistant director for investigations. He said his son had left London a month before the bombing and that his daughter-in-law was also in the United States.

The lawsuit said Hoffman's book also implied that Revell, former head of the FBI's Dallas office, was a co-conspirator in the Oklahoma City bombing, which killed 168 people April 19, 1995.

"That is the most atrocious kind of lies," he said.

Revell said Hoffman never spoke to him about the allegations before his book was published.

In 1999, the book's publisher, Feral House Inc., agreed to destroy all copies because of the inaccuracies. But Revell said the book is still available on the Internet.

Hoffman, believed to be living in San Francisco, could not be reached for comment. He previously acknowledged mistakes in details of the book, but said he held to the essential facts of what he reported.

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